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*Bundeswehr Plans for a National
Command and Control Structure*

Thomas-Durell Young

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92-10718



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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS		
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE					
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) ACN 92016			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION Strategic Studies Institute		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) AWCI	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION		
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050			7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
			PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) Bundeswehr Plans for a National Command and Control Structure					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Young, Thomas-Durell					
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Final		13b. TIME COVERED FROM _____ TO _____	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 92 Mar 24		15. PAGE COUNT 12
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) Bundeswehr; NATO; Operational control; Central Region		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP			
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) Since the armament of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955, the Bundeswehr has lacked the capability to execute effectively military operations outside of NATO command and control structures. The reason for this has been the lack of a national operational control capability. Under previous security imperatives where the Bundeswehr focused practically all of its attention to the Central Region, NATO structures were envisaged to provide direction. Now that security concerns on the flanks are coming to the forefront in the Alliance, the Federal Republic has begun to reorient its defense structures to provide assistance to its allies outside the Central Region. The creation of a national command and control capability for the Bundeswehr is a step in this direction.					
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Marianne P. Cowling			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (717) 245-3001		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL AWCI

**BUNDESWEHR PLANS FOR A NATIONAL
COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURE**

Thomas-Durell Young

March 24, 1992

☒ Distribution
☐ Information
☐ Action
☐ Recommendation
☐ Identification

By _____	
Distribution/ _____	
Availability Codes _____	
Dist	Special
A-1	



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FOREWORD

Amid the massive political changes taking place in Europe, an important development has gone all but ignored. Since the armament of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955, the *Bundeswehr* has lacked the capability to execute effectively military operations outside of NATO command and control structures. The simple reason for this has been the lack of a national operational control capability. Under previous security imperatives where the *Bundeswehr* focused practically all of its attention to the Central Region, NATO structures were envisaged to provide direction. Now that security concerns on the flanks are coming to the forefront in the Alliance, the Federal Republic has begun to reorient its defense structures to provide assistance to its allies outside the Central Region. The creation of a national command and control capability for the *Bundeswehr* is a step in this direction.

The author of this report, Dr. Thomas-Durell Young, is writing a longer analysis of this development in German defense policy. However, given the importance of this move by Bonn, and lack of information currently available on this subject, it was felt that an SSI Special Report was warranted. Information on this subject was obtained by numerous interviews with German officials and through a review of the German press.

This report constitutes a contribution to meeting SSI's annual research objectives as established in, The Army's Strategic Role in a New World Order: A Prioritized Research Program, 1992.



KARL W. ROBINSON
Colonel, U.S. Army
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BUNDESWEHR PLANS FOR A NATIONAL COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURE

Background.

Since the arming of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955, the *Bundeswehr* has lacked an overarching national operational control capability, as a result of fear on the part of many in the West of the reemergence of a *Generalstab*. Now that Germany must be prepared to contribute forces to NATO commands beyond Allied Forces Central Europe, and possibly outside NATO command arrangements as part of a solely European or UN effort, a greatly improved national operational control structure is needed.

Presently, peacetime operational control of the forces within Germany resides with the service chiefs, or *Inspekteur* of the three armed services: the Army (*Heer*), Navy (*Bundesmarine*) and Air Force (*Luftwaffe*). Wartime operational control over *Bundeswehr* units assigned to NATO would be controlled by NATO commanders. There has been, for instance, no German command of Army forces above the Corps level; this being provided by Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces Central Europe--CINCENT (a German four-star general). In essence, until the unification of Germany, the *Bundeswehr* was structured to be employed mainly as an instrument for the defense of the Central Region. The ongoing acrimonious political debate in Germany over the possible employment of the *Bundeswehr* for out-of-area

missions in the future underscores the depth of domestic opposition in that country to the mere theoretical proposition of employing military means to achieve national objectives outside of solely the defense of the country.

Nonetheless, German officials have defined a need for a national operational control structure, both for the national defense of its eastern territory (which cannot be part of NATO arrangements until after 1994), as well as to engage in even the most basic operations outside of German territory. The unification of Germany under the provisions of the Federal Republic's constitution (*Grundgesetz*) produced two important implications regarding the operational control structure of *Bundeswehr* forces. First, in a legal sense, the "2+4 Treaty" resulted in the return of full sovereignty to a unified Germany. Consequently, the Federal Republic now has the legal obligation, not to mention the political imperative, to provide for the defense of all its territory, including some missions which were previously carried out by allied forces (e.g., air policing). Second, until the end of 1994, *Bundeswehr* forces stationed in the *Laender* of the former German Democratic Republic cannot fall under NATO command structures. An interim national command headquarters, *Bundeswehr Kommando Ost*, was established in Strausberg upon unification, but was dissolved on July 1, 1991. Both command and control of *Bundeswehr* forces stationed in the east are now the responsibility of the

individual armed service headquarters, which lack any central coordinating body.

Impediments to Creating a National Command Structure.

Under current laws and administrative directives of the Federal Republic, the creation of a national joint command and control structure can only be accomplished within strict confines, as is the case in any democracy. Articles 65(a) and 115(b) of the *Grundgesetz* stipulate that command over the *Bundeswehr* can only be exercised by the Federal Minister of Defense during peacetime, to be transferred to the Federal Chancellor upon the promulgation of a state of defense. These articles enshrine the concept of civilian control over the military. Consequently, there is no legal basis for the creation of a *Generalstab*. This legal provision is the result of the intention of post-war German political leaders to institutionalize the concept of *Primat der Politik* (primacy of political leadership over the military).

A further definition of the relationship between the Federal Minister of Defense and the *Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr* (the Chief of Staff of the Federal Armed Forces) occurred on March 21, 1970 in the form of what has become known as the "*Blankeneser Erlass*," or ministerial decree. Under existing administrative regulations, the *Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr* is not in the chain of command between the Federal Chancellor/Federal Minister of Defense, the *Inspekteur* of the

individual services or even NATO command structures. In consequence, his position in this area is only advisory and he has no authority to exercise wartime operational control over the German armed services. The three individual service *Inspekteur* are also limited by this decree to exercising command and control over their respective services, but only within Germany. Finally, the Federal Ministry of Defense (*BMVg*) simply is not structured to provide operational control over *Bundeswehr* units.

Proposed National Command Structure.

In view of the various legal guidelines outlined above, as well as the politically sensitive nature of restructuring the *Bundeswehr* for operations outside of the Central Region, the *BMVg* has proposed the following solution. Since it will not be possible to maintain a large standing command and control structure, a *Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando* (Armed Forces Command Headquarters) will be established at Koblenz. The standing complement of the *Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando* is envisaged to be approximately 80 to 100 individuals. This small joint headquarters will largely limit itself to planning. When required, it will be augmented by personnel seconded from the Central Joint Staff (*Fuehrungsstab der Streitkraefte--FueS*) in the *BMVg* and the three service staff headquarters.

It must be stressed that this headquarters will be distinct from the new *Heeresfuehrungskommando* (Army Command

Headquarters) also being established in Koblenz at the previous home of *III Korps*. This headquarters, of approximately 100 personnel, will be led by a three-star general and will exercise command and control over the three German Army Corps. Its span of control is envisaged to encompass approximately 300 posts. In other words, this new service headquarters will provide command and control over the German Army as a whole and create a new level of command between three German Army Corps and CINCENT. Moreover, it is the intention of the *BMVg* that this command be given priority in its development and, consequently, would be fused to the *Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando*, when required, to provide crucial command support to its joint counterpart.

From the perspective of the *BMVg*, the new joint headquarters will be capable of supporting a wide range of military operations, particularly at lower levels of the conflict spectrum, to include crisis management. Indeed, the need for some form of a *Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando* was made clear during the conduct of *Bundeswehr* humanitarian relief operations carried out in Iran, Iraq and Turkey in spring 1991. According to a recent German press report, during this deployment of 500 *Bundeswehr* personnel, General Georg Bernhardt's command channels had to be routed through 23 offices in the *BMVg* and other ministries. Even within the *Bundeswehr* deployment to the Middle East, there was confusion.

For instance, *FueS*-III-6 was responsible for operations in Turkey and Iran, while *FueS*-III-3 was in charge of *Luftwaffe* missions in Iraq, within the framework of the United Nations.¹

As an interim measure, until the *Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando* is fully established, *Fuehrungsbereitshaften* (readiness command groups) are to be expanded. Indeed, should the need for national operational control over *Bundeswehr* units be needed, current thinking in Germany tends toward strengthening *Fuehrungsbereitshaften* in the *BMVg*, which will then fall under the direction of the *Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando*. This is due in large part to the announced cuts in the size of command and administrative staffs throughout the *Bundeswehr* and the *BMVg*. There is one such organization in each of the seven *FueS* divisions, in addition to one in each of the three service headquarters. Moreover, in the *BMVg* itself, a current proposal is that *Fuehrungsbereitshaften* be upgraded to manage more effectively crisis situations.

Thus, the present plan to exercise national control over *Bundeswehr* forces is to create a limited central nucleus headquarters group, to be augmented by the *Heeresfuehrungskommando* and by specialized personnel from *Fuehrungsbereitshaften*. If circumstances require the appointment of a task force commander by the Federal Chancellor or the Federal

¹See, *Welt am Sonntag* (Hamburg), March 1, 1992.

Minister of Defense, to maintain the legal principle of civilian control over the military, then the transfer of operational control of specified *Bundeswehr* units by the Federal Chancellor/Federal Minister of Defense, for a clearly defined missions and for a specific period of time, to the commander will be effected. By following these provisions, it is felt that the government can employ *Bundeswehr* units for national, European or U.N. operations, without changing current law and regulations. The latter issue is not an inconsequential consideration in view of the extreme domestic political sensitivity in Germany over the issue of the planned employment of the *Bundeswehr* for operations outside of the Central Region.

Finally, according to a recent press report, in the view of *Fues-IV*, the *Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando* should be directly responsible to the *Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr*.² It is also being proposed that the *Generalinspekteur* assume greater force planning responsibilities currently carried out under the direction of the three service chiefs of staff. This initiative would substantially increase the power of the office of the *Generalinspekteur* and would relegate the three service chiefs to largely administrative functions.

² *Ibid.*

Problematic Aspects of German National Command Structures.

There is no question that the Federal Republic of Germany has no ambition to recreate a *Generalstab* in the classical sense. Indeed, current German plans closely mirror, in principle, U.S. experience in creating joint structures for its armed services. However, the attempt on the part of the Federal Republic to end one additional vestige of "singularization" will surely not go unnoticed by Germany's neighbors. Notwithstanding past memories of a nationalized German defense policy, the *BMVg* has proposed to create a national command structure under civilian control and in the open. German political and defense officials continue to state that European defense integration is a *sine qua non* of present and future German security policy, which is not subject to review. However, as a unified and sovereign country, now with national defense responsibilities, especially beyond the Central Region as part of Alliance responsibilities, the ability to command *Bundeswehr* forces is required.

From the perspective of the United States and the Western Alliance, a number of unknowns need to be addressed by German officials if they are to succeed in establishing this structure without creating a negative political response among Germany's allies.

- o What form will German contributions to NATO contingencies outside of Germany take: individual service contributions or joint task forces?
- o While recognizing current *ad hoc* joint arrangements, other nations' experience indicates that these types of arrangements are found wanting. What form of joint command and control organization does the *BMVg* envisage?
- o While a formal allied liaison relationship to the *Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando* might be considered, is such a relationship in U.S. interests, particularly if it is to be effected on a reciprocal basis?
- o While acknowledging that the *Bundeswehr* is dominated by the Army, and the principal missions of the other two services are to support land operations, what steps will the *BMVg* take to ensure that a nonstanding joint command structure will operate successfully in time of crisis, let alone in war?
- o How does the *Bundeswehr* intend to validate the efficacy of its joint command and control arrangements?